

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 1

**Keith Burke, Superintendent
Tamara Drozin, Director of Special Education**

Final Report

March 8, 2000

**Visit Conducted on:
October 27 and 28, 1999**

Team Members:

Maryclare Heffernan, Chairperson
Ruth Littlefield, State Consultant
Paula Baldwin
Maria Barry
Deb Wolters
Nancy Brogden
Mary Brooks
Cindy Buswell
Becky Cawley
Clare Fedolfi
Harvey Harkness
Kevin Maes
Peter Nagle
Jennifer Veilleux
Terry Birmingham

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Status of Corrective Actions from Previous Program Approval Visit
- III. Issues of Significance
- IV. Citations to the New Hampshire Standards for the Education of Students with Disabilities
(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 1

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 1 comprised of the following schools: First Friends Pre-School, Antrim Elementary School, Bennington Elementary School, Dublin Consolidated School, Frankestown Elementary School, Greenfield Elementary School, Hancock Elementary School, Peterborough Elementary School, Temple Elementary School, Great Brook Middle School, South Meadow Middle School and Conval High School. The visiting team met on October 27 and 28, 1999 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Superintendent of Schools, Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted on April 12-13, 1994*

As a result of visits to each of the schools in SAU 1, the review of policies and procedures and interviews with staff and administrators; the visiting team determined that the district has pursued ongoing educational improvements in all areas previously noted in need of correction.

Of note, the new Education Support Model (EST) has significantly improved the overall system of support offered to all students. Tutoring and support was previously offered at times by paraprofessionals, in some cases designing their own lesson plans and working without direct supervision. This is no longer the case. Each school building now has at least one full time special education teacher who oversees the individual needs of students with disabilities as well as students who may benefit from early intervention support. This innovative model appears to be very successful and has shifted the responsibilities from paraprofessionals to certified staff.

The recent development of the Special Education Teacher's Manual offers district staff a very comprehensive guide to all special education procedures. This excellent manual will provide a means for staff to follow consistent practice and is an important reference for general

information. A number of the previously identified areas of noncompliance included basic procedural oversights and the new manual clearly outlines special education procedures.

A K-12 Curriculum for the Life Skills programs has been under development by staff and will soon be completed. The First Friends Preschool Program uses an appropriate developmentally based curriculum. Other curriculum components include relevant instructional programs such as Project Read and Sample Math. The district aligns all general education curriculum with the NH Frameworks. Discussion during the visit addressed the possibility of SAU 1 beginning to align instructional goals and objectives in IEPs with the same general education curriculum, thus bringing all areas of instruction and assessment (NHEIAP) in line.

There has been ongoing staff development offered to address a variety of instructional and procedural areas. Staff report that this has been highly beneficial. While most of the previously identified areas of non-compliance have been corrected, this visiting team did note that there continues to be a lack of documentation regarding the LEA representative at special education meetings. In a few cases, it was noted that evaluations may be taking longer than 45 days, but this is not seen as a district wide pattern.

Overall, SAU 1 had very few previously noted areas of noncompliance and continue to demonstrate a well designed offering of educational services for all students. The high standards and professional concern for excellence in teaching is obvious throughout this district.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

It was clear to the visiting team that the delivery of special education services to students within SAU 1 is an integral part of overall programming district wide. The team agreed that there is a very high level of professionalism and well designed instruction to be found in every school building. There are no significant district-wide patterns of noncompliance throughout the SAU. The individual areas found to be in need of correction do not, for the most part, imply a system wide concern.

The district is commended for the implementation of the very innovative EST model of offering students and staff support. Staff throughout the district report that this improvement has significantly benefited all aspects of instruction.

The continuum of services presently available to students is an effective way to provide for the wide range of student educational needs within the district, as well as to bring previously placed out-of-district students back to their home schools. The present number of students placed out-of-district is significantly lower than it had been previously.

The adoption of new special education forms, in conjunction with the development of the Special Education Teacher's Manual has already had a significant impact on the general understanding and consistency of special education policies and procedures. The administrative staff are commended for their work in these important areas.

An area that the district may want to review is the need for greater consistency in programming approaches throughout the district. The increased use of transition planning should begin to

address this area. Of note is the concern that a larger than usual number of students are referred for special education services at the Middle School level. The staff may wish to explore the reasons for this and to initiate a plan to alleviate the burden of assessment and identification at the Middle Schools.

The SAU has done a fine job with the implementation of a district wide technology plan. Evidence of current technology is present in each school. There was, however some concern that additional computers and software may be needed for some of the special education programs.

In conclusion, this district demonstrates a very high level of educational support to all students. The administrative leadership is commended for the establishment of high standards and a clear vision. School staff express pride in their schools and in their individual work. There is an impressive atmosphere of professionalism and respect throughout the district that is commended. Students appear happy and engaged in learning and parents report satisfaction with their child's programming. The district has set high educational standards and the results are seen in each of the school buildings.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The district is commended for the high educational standards that are apparent throughout the SAU. The Administrative leadership is commended for their role in encouraging and supporting an outstanding educational model for all students.
- The EST model appears to be very beneficial in providing support and interventions to all students.
- The district Special Education Administration is commended for the development of the Special Education Teachers Manual. It offers a comprehensive and well designed manual of all policies and procedures.
- The adoption of new special education forms has already had an impact in district wide consistency and compliance with special education process and procedures.
- The district has a very professional and child centered atmosphere and is commended for the overall quality of services offered for all children.
- The district is commended for the collaboration with parents of children with disabilities and for that group's development of the Special Education Services Handbook.
- The district is commended for its well maintained school buildings and for the ongoing improvements to individual schools. The only exception was found at the high school, where overcrowding is an issue.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.534(a)(2) The district has not begun to implement the new federal requirement giving notice of Procedural Safeguards with each IEP meeting invitation. (This is a new requirement.)

Ed# 1109.01(j) The district's new IEP form does not include a statement of individuals or providers responsible for implementing the IEP.

SUGGESTIONS:

- During the visit, transitions from school to school appeared as an area in need of review. There are some differences in philosophy and programming throughout the district that may result in student difficulty in transitioning from one grade level to another. It is suggested that a review of programming philosophy and practice may be beneficial to students, parents and staff.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE
Continued

- The visiting team suggests a review of the one day professional leave available to staff for the purpose of pursuing staff development opportunities out of district. Staff report a desire for more time for professional development. Although it is noted that there are a good number of in house staff development hours scheduled throughout the year.

First Friends Pre-School and Community Pre-School Programs

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) First Friends Pre-School 2) Community based programs

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 File

COMMENDATIONS:

- The First Friends Pre-School is a well designed, inclusive preschool program that very successfully meets the developmental needs of the SAU's preschool students.
- The staff have created a model of regular and consistent teaming, that includes paraprofessionals and that results in excellent communication about children.
- Home visits for children transitioning into the pre-school programs are a positive aspect of the program.
- There is a strong transitioning component from Early Intervention programs to Preschool and from Preschool to Kindergarten programs.
- There are very positive relationships established with community preschool providers.
- There is strong administrative support for the preschool programs and for professional development for staff.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.504(a)(2) 1 file did not document the Procedural Safeguards were sent to parents with IEP meeting notice.

Ed#1109.01(j) Individuals responsible for implementing the IEP are not identified on the IEP form.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider expanding the explanation of Child Find and Pre-School services in the Special Education Services Handbook.
- Create a consistent process for transferring student records (including evaluations) from Early Intervention to Pre-school programs.
- Include parents of preschool students on school or district committees.

Antrim Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education staffing structure is very strong and effective in meeting the needs of students identified with educational disabilities, as well as providing support and interventions to students with other educational needs.
- There is well established communication and consultation between regular and special education staff that results in positive collaboration.
- The school staff approaches their work through a full school team model. Meetings to discuss and problem solve student education issues include all relevant members of the staff in an excellent collaborative model.
- The building principal provides strong, positive support to all programs.
- The school has a warm and inviting feel to it with student art work prominently displayed.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.504 (a)(2) Procedural safeguards are not sent with each IEP notice to parents.

Ed#1107.05 (k) One file did not show evidence that a student evaluation was completed in 45 days. There was no evidence of a signed extension.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Dublin Consolidated School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1)Modified Regular

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 File

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff to student ratios allow for a high quality of special education services.
- The newly renovated school building provides a wonderful learning environment. The general atmosphere in the school offers a very positive, open and affirming setting for students.
- The early intervention offered to students through the EST model is extraordinary.
- Staff work well together in a well designed collaborative model.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.504(a)(2) Procedural safeguards not sent with each IEP meeting notice to parents.

Ed#1107.07(c)(3) 1 file: Did not show evidence of LEA Representative at meeting.

Ed#1109.01 (j) 1 file: It is not clear who is responsible for implementation of IEP goals.

Ed#1109.01(n) 1 file: LEA Representative is not identified.

Ed#1109.03

Ed#1115.06 1 file: No clear evidence that Least Restrictive Environment was considered.

Ed#1123.04(a) 1 file: File did not contain a Record of Disclosure.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Francetown Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school has a very positive, child centered atmosphere.
- The regular and special education staff work together in a successful collaboration.
- The EST model is highly effective in providing support to staff, and in offering early intervention assistance to students.
- The student files are very well organized.
- The school is well equipped with materials and educational tools necessary for instruction.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.03 2 files: Evaluation teams did not include a teacher certified in the area of suspected disability. (Learning Disability)

Ed#1107.05 1 file: Evaluation not conducted within 45 days, no evidence of a signed extension.

Ed#1109.01(b) 1 file: Goals and objectives on student IEP are not measurable.

Ed#1109.01(j) 2 files: The individuals responsible for implementing the IEP are not identified.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Greenfield Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school has a very positive and welcoming atmosphere.
- There is very good communication between regular and special education staff.
- The EST model provides excellent early intervention for students and support to staff.
- The paraprofessional support is very good.
- The student files are well organized.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.345(b,1,I) 1 file: Procedural Safeguards not sent to parents with notification
Ed#1109.04(a) of IEP meeting. No 10 day notice evident.

Ed#1109.01(b)(i)(j) 1 file: IEP does not include measurable goals; does not include evaluation procedures and schedules on at least an annual basis and does not identify the individuals responsible for implementing the IEP.

CFR300.347 2 files: IEPs do not include a statement of how progress will be measured.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Hancock Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The regular and special education staff feel very positively about the EST model. They find the early support and intervention extremely helpful to both students and staff.
- The EST teacher is very accessible to all staff.
- There is excellent communication between school and home regarding special education.
- The records were in very good condition and no citations were found.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

None

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Pierce Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 File

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school has dedicated, caring staff who demonstrate a willingness to modify for children, work collaboratively and provide a fully inclusive setting for all students.
- The EST model is a highly effective one that allows outreach for all students and creates an excellent opportunities for teacher consultation and collaboration.
- The school has a very positive child centered feel to it.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.504(a)(2) 1 file: Procedural Safeguards were not sent to parents with notice of IEP meeting.

Ed#1109.01(j) 1 file: The individuals responsible for implementing the IEP are not identified.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Peterborough Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program 2) Life Skills Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school has dedicated and experienced staff who offer excellent instruction and are concerned about the needs of all students.
- The school's program for students with emotional disabilities is highly effective. Students remain in district and participate in all school activities.
- There is a well designed continuum of services available to all students.
- The school has a warm, child centered atmosphere.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.07 2 files: Identification of LEA representative is not clearly identified.

Ed#1109.01(j) IEP forms do not include identification of provider implementing service.

CFR 300.534(a)(2) Procedural safeguards for parents are not sent with IEP meeting notice.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Maintain the number of EST staff presently available in the building, even if the student population should dip below 400.
- Consider space improvements for some EST staff.

Temple Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 File

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school environment is warm and affirming. A true community school.
- Students with educational disabilities are fully included in all aspects of the school's programs.
- The student to staff ratio is excellent and affords a high quality of services.
- Early intervention opportunities (particularly in the area of literacy) are excellent.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR 300.534(a)(2) Procedural safeguards are not given to parents with notice of IEP meeting.

Ed#1109.01(n) 1 file: It is unclear who is acting as LEA Representative.
Ed#1109.03

Ed#1115.06 1 file: No evidence that LRE was determined annually.

SUGGESTIONS:

- No suggestions at this time.

Great Brook Middle School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program 2) Resource Room
3) Alternative Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 2 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- Wonderfully supportive administration. Excellent leadership. Very enthusiastic principal and staff who go above and beyond to help all students and support each other.
- There is a school-wide emphasis on individualizing all students' work.
- The "In-House Support" system is excellent and should be shared with other schools.
- The pink form and white card system for dealing with issues and rewarding good work is a highly effective system. Involving students with assisting and assessing the other students through peer mediation is a great model.
- The teaching of organization skills is commended.
- There is an excellent system of teaming between regular and special education staff that results in successful programming for all students.
- There is good communication with parents.
- The mentoring program for new staff is an excellent idea.
- Staff maintain a willingness to seek new solutions and an openness to new ideas. Very creative staff.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.08(c) 2 files. No student observation when identifying students with Learning Disability

Ed#1109.04 3 files. 10 day notice of IEP meeting not fully met.

Ed#1123.04 1 file. No record of disclosure in file.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Share the innovative programs at Great Brook Middle School with other schools.
- Consistency between school programs district wide should be reviewed.
- Review the number of students who are referred at the Middle School level for special education services to determine if the referral and identification process district wide should be revised.

South Meadow Middle School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room
3) Life Skills Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff are competent and highly skilled. The school's culture expects every teacher to be responsible for making instructional modifications necessary for individual student success.
- There are strong, student centered programs at the South Meadow School
- There is excellent and frequent communication with parents.
- The school's programs educate all students in the least restrictive environment.
- There are opportunities for students to develop leadership and personal responsibility.
- The Life Skills Program provides educational opportunity for children with complex needs.
- Related services are integrated into the instructional program for each child.
- Regularly scheduled meetings of teams are successful in addressing student needs and successes.
- The advisor/advisee program is effective.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR300.347(a)(4)(5)(7)(c) 2 files: IEP components do not include: Extent of participation with non-disabled children in regular classes; modifications required for State-wide or district-wide assessments of student achievement; statement of why test is not appropriate and how child will be assessed.

CFR300.347(a)(7)(1) 1 file: No statement of how progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of child's progress toward the annual goals.

CFR300.346(a)(1)(3) 2 files: No mention of any special factors required for child to receive FAPE made on IEP.

Ed#1107.02 1 file: No written notice given to parents within 15 days of initial referral.

Ed#1107.05 1 file: Evaluation not conducted within 45 days.

Ed#1107.05(k) Staff reported that a backlog of students scheduled for evaluation is resulting in testing taking longer than 45 days.

Ed#1107.08(c)(d)(e) 2 files. There is no evidence of student observation, evaluation summary reports or team signatures.

South Meadow Middle School, continued
--

<u>Ed#1109.01(c)(d)</u>	1 file. No evidence of extent to which student will participate in regular education classes and no expectations identified for participation in regular classes.
<u>Ed#1109.01(j)</u>	3 files. The individuals or providers responsible for implementing IEP are not identified.
<u>Ed#1109.01(n)</u>	3 files. There is no LEA representative identified by signature.
<u>Ed#1109.03</u>	2 files. Unable to determine if Team composition is appropriate. Signatures of LEA Representative and regular education teacher not indicated.
<u>Ed#1109.04(a)</u>	2 files. No evidence that an IEP meeting was held.
<u>Ed#1109.04(e-g)</u>	1 file. When parents can not and do not attend IEP meeting, there is no record of attempts made to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place.
<u>Ed#1109.11</u>	2 files. No evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of IEP. Written progress not given to parents. Progress does not show the extent to which it is sufficient to achieve the goals by the end of the year.
<u>Ed#1115.06</u>	2 files: No evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets criteria.
<u>Ed#1123.04</u>	1 file. There is no record of disclosure in file.
<u>Ed#1125.04</u>	2 files. No written consent for placement. 1 file: No consent to evaluate in file.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Fully implement SAU1's procedures and documentation for special education. This is an area of significant need at this time.
- Continue the alignment of the curriculum with NH State Frameworks.
- Continue to expand the use of a variety of strategies for the teaching of reading matched with the learning needs of individual students.
- Develop an ongoing training program for paraprofessionals.
- Create opportunities for cross level team communication.
- Continue to raise staff awareness regarding curriculum accountability and student success.
- Consider creating a variety of instructional opportunities for students not eligible for the Life Skills Program.

Conval High School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular Program 2) Alternative Program
3) Life Skills Program 4) Resource Room Program

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 Files

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff and programs at the High School appear to be flexible and interested in meeting student needs.
- Students with educational disabilities are included in regular education programs with adequate support.
- Programs appear to make effective use of space available.
- The Alternative Program uses off campus sites in a very effective way to keep students actively engaged.
- Paraprofessionals feel that they are an important part of the students programs and that their input is valuable.
- Staff were very helpful to the visiting team. The special education secretary is commended for the well organized records, with easy access to relevant student information.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.02(b) 2 files: Initial referral missing from records.

Ed#1107.05(a) 1 file: Evaluation report was missing all signatures.

Ed#1113.01 3 files: No vocational evaluation in student records.

Ed#1109.04 1 file: No mention of outside agency invited to IEP meeting to discuss transition services.

Ed#1109.01(e) 1 file. No reference made to Vocational Component for student who is receiving Vocational Education.

Ed#1109.01(l) 1 file. Statement of needed transition services including interagency linkages, responsibilities and instruction.

Ed#1109.03(2)(3) 1 file. Regular education teacher did not attend IEP meeting. Student did attend but did not sign.

Conval High School

SUGGESTIONS:

- There appears to be a need for increased instructional space for students with disabilities.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 1

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU 1

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

COMMENDATIONS:

- The James O. records were found to be in excellent condition. There are no citations found in the three records reviewed.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

There are no citations found at this time.